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NUTRITION

PROGRAM NEWS

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Food Money Management

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Some families have to spend 50 percent or more of their income on food. To get maximum value for each dollar spent, they need help and motivation in planning, buying, and preparing low-cost, nutritious meals. They also need guidance in making optimum use of donated foods, home-grown foods, and food stamps.

Limited equipment and storage facilities, poor health, and limited education may compound the problem of food money management for these families. For them some of the usual money-saving suggestions may not apply. For example, it does little good to suggest casserole dishes if a family has no oven, or to suggest buying large packages of food if storage space is limited. Suggestions must be in terms of available resources.

In this issue of NPN, we report on nutrition education programs with emphasis on aiding the poor and the elderly. In the first section, programs are discussed that are being used to reach this segment of the population with information on wise buying practices. The second section is devoted to buying tips for thrifty food selection.

NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Reaching the poor through personal contact

Personal contact has been the most effective means of reaching the majority of families with the lowest incomes. Both individual and group experiences have been used; each has its advantages. Guidance in the home makes possible the use of the equipment and facilities the homemaker has. Help is specific and individualized. But, through group meetings, the leader can reach more people, and homemakers can help each other solve common problems.

These homemakers are often reluctant to attend group meetings. Transportation may be a problem, or there may be young children or aged family members that cannot be left alone.

To solve the problem of child care, many agencies provide programs for children while their mothers are meeting.

In a few areas, leaders from low-income groups have been recruited to stimulate interest in group meetings. These leaders have successfully organized neighborhood groups that meet in homes, churches, schools, and housing projects to share skills and interests, prepare low-cost recipes, and discuss problems. A home economist provides the necessary training and guidance as well as teaching materials that are adapted to the specific group. The leader provides the communication link between the home economist and low-income families. She knows their problems, their needs, their goals, and their values.

Cooperative Extension Services in all States are expanding their Food and Nutrition Education Programs to make greater use of aides, drawn primarily from the community to be served. The aides will work with families and small groups to improve the nutritional quality of diets and will help them use donated foods and food stamps.

Active participation has proved the best means of motivating low-income groups. Lectures by experts, panel discussions, and one-time training sessions have not worked as well.

Preparing low-cost dishes is a good starting point for teaching food-money management. A homemaker is more likely to serve a new food to her family if she knows that it tastes good and knows how to prepare it. Demonstrations should be simple, and recipes should be easy to prepare with the equipment and ingredients the homemaker has to use.

Other successful activities include:

- *Preparing homemade mixes.* The group can prepare and taste several recipes from the mix, and then make up a batch to take home. Costs of homemade and store-bought mixes can be compared.
- *Taking a trip to a local market* to compare prices, and to purchase food using a food budget.
- *Helping to improve storage facilities.* If storage facilities are poor, food may be spoiled by insects or rodents. Many homemakers need information on how to fix up large cans, jars, and crates for storage.

Reaching the poor through television

For the past 4 years, two home economists from the University of Maryland Cooperative Extension Service, Baltimore City office, have reached low-income families with a community service program. The show, "Learning To Do," appears weekly over WBAL-TV. Programs have covered a wide variety of topics related to food money management including:

- "Food For Thrifty Families."—This series used USDA materials as a basis. Recipes were prepared, and buying pointers discussed.
- "The Food Stamp Plan."—An explanation of the plan was given, with helpful suggestions on how to use the stamps to best advantage.
- "Three Meals From One Chicken."—Preparation of fried chicken, chicken salad, and a tasty dish using chicken giblets were demonstrated.

Copies of a summary of upcoming topics are distributed to health and welfare departments, recreation centers, housing projects, and other organizations to publicize the program.

To involve more community leaders, a "Learning To Do" advisory group was formed. This group meets occasionally to brainstorm on ideas for the program. Members come from health and welfare departments, community action programs, maternity centers, the Dairy Council and other agencies.

"Learning To Do" has an exciting new idea—homemaker TV parties. At the TV parties, a group of women watch the program, and then discuss it and exchange ideas. Volunteers will serve as leaders for the groups. Although this project is still in the preliminary stage, it promises to be an effective means of reaching the hard-to-reach.

Reaching the poor through community effort

Through a cooperative effort of USDA and the National Association of Food Chains, a skit has been developed as part of the "Food Makes The Difference" campaign to reach low-income families with information about food money management and to encourage participation in the food stamp program. This skit is performed in churches and schools by residents of the neighborhood.

The skit portrays the increased buying power made possible by food stamps. Using slides, the performers take the audience on a trip through the grocery store to emphasize wise purchases.

The "Food For Thrifty Families" leaflets, developed by USDA, are used in conjunction with the skit.

Reaching the elderly with nutrition information

The elderly face problems which may affect their interest in food and their ability to prepare it. Appetites lag

when one must eat alone. Energy is frequently diminished. It may not seem worth the effort to prepare a meal. Physical problems may make dietary modifications necessary. Where habits are well established and nutritional knowledge is limited, changes are difficult to institute.

A positive approach is the most acceptable one. Learn what they enjoy and can eat, and make suggestions to round out meals and provide the necessary nutrients and food energy. Suggestions should be consistent with the individual's physical ability to shop for and prepare foods, the availability of foods, and the amount of money available for purchasing food.

Let's take a look at a program directed to the elderly. A series of four 1-hour meetings called "Adventure In Eating" was given by the D. C. Home Economics Association, in a joint effort with the American Association of Retired Persons, to reach the elderly with basic nutrition information.

At each meeting, participants received a week's menu plan with a marketing list and recipes for one person. Foods suggested on the plan were low in cost, easily prepared, and required a minimum of equipment.

The first meeting featured a market basket of foods based on the marketing list and menu handout. At the second meeting, some of the recipes in the handouts were prepared. At the third meeting, participants were divided into five workshop groups. Food buying, meal planning, cooking, weight control, and community resources for finding answers to food and nutrition questions were discussed. The wrap-up meeting featured a food film and question and answer session on eating for health and enjoyment.

Response was overwhelming. The group grew from 125 participants at the outset to 350 at the final meeting. Clearly, the elderly not only need but also can become interested in sound nutrition information when presented in a lively, enthusiastic manner.

BUYING POINTERS

The first step to wise buying is the shopping list. A shopping list helps to cut down on buying "extras" that add to the grocery bill but add little to the nutritive value of the meal.

Another way to cut impulse buying is to shop once a week, rather than every day. Shopping once a week can save time as well as money, but when transportation and storage are problems—as is so often the case with low-income families—this may be impossible. If the homemaker has to carry food from the nearest store, she will not be able to shop around for good buys or to buy food for an entire week in one trip. If storage is limited, food purchased for a week may spoil before it can be used.

If the family gets a newspaper, the homemaker can

NOTE

The Greater Los Angeles Nutrition Council cannot mail their Bibliography of Recommended Readings in Foods and Nutrition free to those who request it. This material was mentioned as a sale item in the July-October issue of Nutrition Program News. The Council is unable to fill any such requests unless 50 cents accompanies each one.

watch for advertised specials and plan meals around them. Specials are often offered at the end of the week, usually Thursday through Saturday, so this is a good time to shop. However, if the welfare check comes early in the week, this may not be a practical suggestion.

The person who plans and prepares the meals should do the shopping alone, if possible. It is difficult to think about good buys while keeping one eye on Johnny. Also, if children come along, they are apt to run up the food bill by choosing extra foods.

Careful attention to prices is basic to good buying practices, but comparing prices is not always easy. Some homemakers have little comprehension of basic arithmetic. Moreover, true price comparisons must be made on foods of the same quality. Some training in making price comparisons is highly desirable in education programs on food-money management.

Careful price comparisons are important when buying staples. The purchase of large cans and packages can usually save money, but is practical only if the family:

- Can use the food before it spoils.
- Has room to store the food.
- Will not have to do without other foods they need in order to pay for the large size.

Food guides are effective tools for promoting better nutrition. Here are some buying pointers for foods in the four food groups of the Daily Food Guide.

The meat group

In this country, meat and meat alternates account for over one-third of the food expenditures of most families. Nearly all meals are built around them so it is especially important to buy foods from this group wisely. Considerable savings can be made by careful planning and selection.

Meat.—Price per pound is not a good yardstick for judging meat bargains. One way to find the best buy is to compare costs of different cuts, grades, and kinds of meat in amounts needed for a family meal. While several cuts of meat may be the same price per pound, the cost of a serving will vary with the amount of bone, fat, and gristle on the meat. Some families buy boney meats because they appear to provide larger servings. But lean meats are often a better buy. Meats—such as salt pork, bacon, and some sausages—are not as good buys in terms of nutrients because of fat content.

Examples of the market cost of some popular cuts of meat are shown in the table that follows. Prices per pound were published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, September 1968, and represent average U.S. prices. For this comparison, one serving equals 3 ounces of cooked lean meat. Cost of fuel for preparing these cuts of meat is not included.

	Price per pound	Cost of one serving
Hamburger, regular	\$0.57	\$0.15
Sirloin steak, bone in	1.22	.52
Rump roast, boneless	1.15	.39
Chuck roast, bone in	.64	.29
Ham, whole	.70	.24
Lamb chops, loin	1.66	.75
Pork chops, loin	1.06	.47

Less tender cuts of beef—such as chuck, heel-of-round, and brisket—usually provide protein for less money than more tender cuts, such as rib roast and T-bone steaks.

The lower grades of beef, USDA Good and USDA Standard, are also good buys. Although they are less tender and juicy than the top two grades, USDA Prime and USDA Choice, they provide more lean meat and generally cost less. Demonstrations on cooking less tender meats can stimulate interest in trying some new low-cost recipes.

Poultry.—Compared to many meats, chicken and turkey are relatively low-cost sources of protein. Larger well-fleshed birds are often better buys than smaller ones because they have more meat in proportion to bone.

Chickens sold whole generally cost a few cents less per pound than chickens cut up, and considerably less than chicken pieces such as breasts and legs. While savings may not appear large, a 15-cent savings on two 2½ pound chickens bought whole, rather than cut up, may mean another can of vegetables for the family.

Fish.—Many varieties of fish are less costly per serving than many cuts of meat. U.S. Grade C fishery products are just as wholesome and nutritious as the higher grades and are a thrifty buy for use in dishes where appearance may not be important.

Fresh fish generally costs less during certain seasons of the year. Out-of-season, frozen fish may be less expensive than fresh fish of the same kind.

The price of canned tuna is determined by the kind of meat and style of pack. "Light meat" tuna costs less than "white meat" tuna. In descending order of price, packs are fancy or solid, chunk, and flaked or grated.

Dry Beans and Peas.—Dry beans and peas are among the least costly foods in the meat group. They are available in a wide variety, and are good sources of protein.

Eggs.—Eggs are another low cost source of protein. Best buys are often found in the late summer and fall. In general, if there is less than a 7-cent price difference per dozen eggs between one size and the next smaller size *in the same grade*, the larger eggs provide more for the money. For example, if large eggs cost 56 cents a dozen, medium eggs should cost no more than 49 cents to be a better buy (56 cents minus 7 cents).

Grade B eggs are wholesome and have the same nutri-

tive value as the more attractive, more expensive grade A eggs. Grade B eggs are satisfactory for scrambling and for combining with other ingredients in cooked dishes.

Brown eggs may be sold for less than white eggs although both are of equal quality.

The milk group

Milk.—Both nonfat dry milk and evaporated milk are lower in cost than whole fluid milk, and can be used in cooking and baking as well as for drinking. Whole fluid milk may cost two to three times as much as reconstituted nonfat dry milk. Families receiving donated foods may need to be shown how to reconstitute the donated nonfat dry milk.

To encourage use of nonfat dry milk by families who do not like its flavor, demonstrations have been given on making a mixture of half reconstituted nonfat dry milk and half whole milk. This mixture tastes more like whole milk and still provides savings for the family. Low-cost recipes using evaporated or nonfat dry milk can also stimulate interest in their use.

Home-delivered milk generally costs more than store-bought milk although some companies give discounts on large orders. Milk is usually less expensive when purchased in a half-gallon container rather than in two 1-quart containers.

Cheese.—A large variety of cheeses is available in a wide price range. Imported cheeses usually cost more than domestic cheeses; natural cheeses often cost more than pasteurized process cheeses; aged or sharp natural cheeses may cost more than mild ones; and prepackaged sliced, cubed, or grated cheeses usually cost more than wedges or sticks of cheese. Cottage cheese flavored with chives, pimientos, or other ingredients is usually more expensive than similar cheese bought plain and seasoned at home.

The fruit and vegetable group

Stores frequently sell their own brand of canned and frozen fruits and vegetables at a lower price than nationally advertised brands. These offer worthwhile savings for the thrifty homemaker. Dented cans may also be available at a discount. However, cans that are bulged or rusted may be spoiled and should be avoided.

Fresh fruits and vegetables are generally lowest in price and best in quality when in season.

The bread and cereal group

Grain products are good sources of food energy and protein at relatively low cost. Whole-grain or enriched

cereals and enriched pasta provide worthwhile amounts of thiamine, niacin, riboflavin, and iron.

When buying cereals, it is necessary to compare costs on the per-pound or per-ounce basis because package weights are not uniform. Ready-to-serve cereals in multi-packs of small boxes are likely to cost considerably more per ounce than the same cereal in a larger box. Sugar-coated cereals usually cost more than unsweetened ones. Cereals to be cooked and served hot nearly always cost less per serving to buy than ready-to-eat cereals.

Emphasis on the use of enriched bread and cereal products is of particular importance to low-income families who need to get the maximum food value for each dollar spent. Demonstrations on making hot breads and sweet rolls with enriched flour show the homemaker how to cut costs while providing nutritious foods her family will enjoy.

A study conducted in Mississippi showed that some families needed help in using donated bulgur, rolled wheat, grits, and cornmeal. Demonstrations of low-cost recipes using these foods would be helpful.

IN CONCLUSION

We must never lose sight of the fact that although the disadvantaged may need help in food selection, they have values, aspirations, and specific family goals—often not the same as those of the people who try to help them. Many of them do remarkably well with the resources they have.

To reach the disadvantaged, we must know the family and the community in which they live. What foods do they like? How are the foods prepared? What cooking and storage facilities do they have? How much money is available for food? Are food aid programs used when available? The more we know, the more realistic our approach will be.

We must start with the established food patterns of the family. These will not be changed simply because someone tells the homemaker what is "good" for her family. Experiences with recommended foods need to be provided so that the homemaker will conclude for herself that these foods taste good and are good choices for her family. Her changed attitude will go a long way toward convincing the rest of the family to make similar changes.

People learn most quickly by becoming involved in the learning experience. Make learning fun and entertaining.

By keeping these ideas in mind, we will be far better able to bring meaningful information to families, and to help them use all the resources they have to meet their needs.